

SCOOP ON SOILS

BEFORE 1: *Planting the Trees of Kenya*

Standards Addressed: English (2024) 3.C.1, 3.RV.1, 3.RI.1

Lesson Preparation: *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* by Claire A. Nivola (Lexile: AD870L)

Instructional Strategy:

1. Use the [RIF Guide for Educators](#) (Figure 1) for your class to read and comprehend the book. To think more deeply about soil, add these questions:
 - a. Why did the soil blow away in the “devil wind”? and
 - b. What did Wangari mean when she said the soil needs its “cloth of green”?
2. If time allows, use the [extension activities](#) to further explore the text (Figure 2).



SCOOP ON SOILS

Planting the Trees of Kenya

The Story of Wangari Maathai



A RIF GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

Themes: Heroic Women, Perseverance, Environment, Education

Grade Level: 3rd to 5th grade

Book Brief: A Kenyan woman fights to save her country, one tree at a time.

Author and Illustrator: Claire A. Nivola

Content Connections: Math, Science, Social Studies

TIME TO READ!

BEFORE WE READ, LET'S LOOK AT...

The Cover: Have students predict what the text is about based on the title and front cover illustrations. Have them make predictions about the text's genre and the author's purpose. Who is Wangari Maathai?

The Pictures: Flip through the pages in the text. Ask your students what they notice about the illustrations. How does the land change throughout the book? What effect might that have on the people of Kenya?

Prior Knowledge: Find out what your students know about Kenya. Show them Kenya on a map and point out

its proximity to the equator. Explain that the climate tends to be wet and hot—ideal for growing many plants. Compare your area's climate with that of Kenya.

Vocabulary: sacred, homestead, plantation, export, silt

Purpose for Reading: Choose the purpose that best fits your class: "Let's read today to find out how the choices people make can affect their environment." "As we read, think about how the people of Kenya found themselves growing poorer even though they were working the same land they always had." "As we learn about Wangari Maathai, think about the difference just one person can make."

WHILE WE READ

MONITORING COMPREHENSION

- ◆ What caused the changes in Kenya while Wangari was away at college?
- ◆ What effect would the changes in the land have on the animals? How would this affect the people?

- ◆ How do you think Wangari felt when she returned to Kenya?
- ◆ What does Wangari mean when she says that good soldiers should have guns in their right hands and trees in their left?
- ◆ What would have happened if Wangari hadn't come back to Kenya?

LET'S THINK ABOUT

Our Purpose: Revisit the purpose: "How can choices people make affect the environment?" "Why did the Kenyan people become poorer while still farming?" "How was just one woman able to have such an effect on an entire country?" Have students look for evidence in the text to support their answers.

Extending Our Thinking: "What makes the fig tree sacred?" Point out that many cultures have traditionally considered certain plants or animals sacred because of all the things they provide for us. Is there any plant, animal or aspect of nature most people in the US today still hold sacred? Have we lost respect for nature? This would make a good think-pair-share activity.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

- ◆ Extension Activities for Educators also available.
- ◆ Vocabulary Scaffolding Sheet also available.



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FIGURE 1. GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



SCOOP ON SOILS

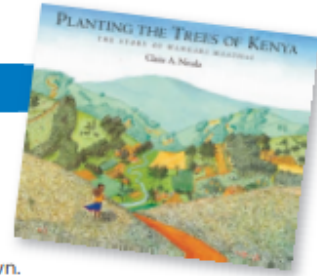
Planting the Trees of Kenya

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RIF EXTENSION ACTIVITIES FOR EDUCATORS

THINK-TAC-TOE ACTIVITY OPTIONS

- ◆ Individual students can choose an activity to complete.
- ◆ Educators can assign an activity for an individual, pairs or groups.
- ◆ Student pairs or cooperative groups can work together on a choice of their own.



<p>TREES, PLEASE</p> <p>As the people of Kenya learned, trees are <i>important!</i> What do trees do for us every day? Using the book and your own research, make a brochure, poster or PowerPoint explaining why trees are so important for the planet.</p> <p><i>Science/Informative Writing</i></p>	<p>FIND YOUR FOOTPRINT</p> <p>Find out your family's ecological <i>footprint</i>, which measures how much land and water you use each year. With a parent or guardian's help, go to www.myfootprint.org and find your family's footprint. How big is it? Think of 5-10 ways to make it smaller. (Website is available in Spanish, Chinese, Russian and French.)</p> <p><i>Science/Math</i></p>	<p>THE POWER OF ONE</p> <p>Wangari made a huge difference in the world even though she was just one person. Can you think of any other people who have changed the world like Wangari? Choose one and make a children's book of your own to tell the story of that person's life. Be sure your book has lots of colorful pictures!</p> <p><i>Word Smart/Art Smart Social Studies</i></p>
<p>PEACE OUT</p> <p>Wangari Maathai won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Research to find out who else has won a Nobel Peace Prize. Pick one winner and make a chart or graphic organizer comparing that person with Wangari. What traits do they have in common that helped them make such a difference in the world?</p> <p><i>Social Studies</i></p>	<p>DEAR DIARY</p> <p>Wangari was put in jail for trying to save her country. Pretend you are Wangari. Write a journal entry for your first night in jail. What's it like? Are you scared? Angry? Are the other prisoners nice? Do you wish you'd stayed in America?</p> <p><i>Word Smart/Creative Writing</i></p>	<p>GO WEST, YOUNG PEOPLE!</p> <p>Some of the most famous trees in the world are the giant redwood, or sequoia, trees in California. What makes these trees so special? Make a colorful tourism brochure to encourage people to come see them. Include information about their location, height, age and other fun facts. Be sure to include pictures and a map!</p> <p><i>Science/Geography</i></p>
<p>BOLDLY GOING</p> <p>There's only one Earth, and when it's gone, it's gone. Imagine you live in 2250. We've used up the whole planet! You and your crew are on a spaceship searching for a new place for humans to live. Write a story or draw a comic about your journey. Do you find a new planet? What's it like? Are there aliens living there?</p> <p><i>Science/Creative Writing</i></p>	<p>DON'T PAVE PARADISE!</p> <p>Oh no! The giant company PollutoCorp wants to tear down your favorite park or forest to build a parking lot! Write a letter to the editor explaining why PollutoCorp should leave your trees alone. Include reasons and concrete details to support your argument.</p> <p><i>Science/Persuasive Writing</i></p>	<p>TAIGA, TAIGA</p> <p>Many people think the Amazon Rainforest is the largest forest in the world. Actually, it's the Taiga Forest. Make a graphic organizer comparing the two. Include information on size, location, climate, tree type and kinds of animals that live in each forest. What percent of Earth's woodlands does each forest represent?</p> <p><i>Science/Geography/Math</i></p>



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FIGURE 2. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

